

China's 1982 Knoxville pavilion both materialised diplomatic rapprochement and revealed tensions, marking a shift from state propaganda towards professional exhibition design.

Representing the People's Republic: the Chinese Pavilion at the Knoxville International Energy Exposition, 1982

Yinrui Xie

The Chinese Pavilion at the 1982 Knoxville International Energy Exposition (KIEE) was the first pavilion erected by the People's Republic of China (PRC) at a world's fair [1].¹ Built shortly after the 1979 rapprochement between the PRC and the United States, it emerged during a diplomatic 'honeymoon' marked by frequent political communication and architectural exchange after thirty years of tension and isolation.² This pavilion materialised the

enthusiastic yet tentative interaction between China and the USA amid a climate of diplomatic sensitivity, economic uncertainty, and shifting ideological positions throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Featuring a monumental tower, a steel-framed main block, and an entrance colonnade with Chinese palatial details, it represented an early experiment in pavilion design under the country's new Reform and Opening-Up policy. As the PRC's debut at a world's fair, its



1 Chinese Pavilion at the Knoxville International Energy Exposition, Knoxville, designed by Shen Rongxuan, 1982.

architecture provoked diverse and sometimes controversial interpretations, influencing the design of Chinese pavilions in the years that followed.³

The architecture of national pavilions at world's fairs has often been understood as a representation of how a country situates itself – or is situated – in global power structures.⁴ Zeynep Çelik argues that world's fairs in the second half of the nineteenth century both served and displayed the politics of colonialism.⁵ The spatial siting of pavilions, she notes, revealed a world order mapped by the West, while the architecture of pavilions of Islamic nations was shaped by European colonisers' perceptions of 'the Orient' and Islamic culture filtered through the lens of Western political and cultural hegemony.⁶ Similarly, Paul Walker observes that at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, the Japanese Pavilion, an eclectic building modelled after the Ho-o-do in Japan to represent the modernity and identity of the nation, was conspicuously ignored by Western scholars like Banister Fletcher. According to Walker, the modernity of the Japanese Pavilion did not comply with preconceptions of Japanese architecture as inherently primitive and inferior.⁷ After the wave of decolonisation, more and more newly established or newly independent countries used world's fairs as stages on which to rebuild their global image within transformed power relations. The Indonesian Pavilion at the 1964 New York World's Fair, for example, was described by President Sukarno as a manifestation of the country's national pride against imperialism and neocolonialism, and as a declaration of Indonesia's foreign policy of equality and neutrality.⁸

For China, shifts in Sino-Western power relations over the past two centuries have been vividly reflected in the design and construction of its pavilions at world's fairs. Most Chinese pavilions erected in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries underscored China's weak position under Western imperialism.⁹ After the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the newly established socialist country was excluded from world's fairs throughout much of the Cold War. The PRC's debut at the 1982 Knoxville fair signalled a significant change in global politics, as the country witnessed the establishment or normalisation of diplomatic relations with major Western countries including the US. With ideological disputes set aside, the realisation of the Chinese Pavilion in Knoxville materialised the enthusiasm of China and the US in celebrating their rapprochement. Key obstacles were removed by Chinese and American politicians, architects, and workers during the planning, design, and construction of the pavilion. The flow of knowledge between Chinese and American architects and the cooperation of workers of the two countries also exemplified the growing cultural exchange between the PRC and the US in the 1980s.

Under such circumstances, the Chinese Pavilion was erected as an exhibition structure to display the country to an international audience amid the new changes in global politics; meanwhile, it also served as a commercial investment for the fair organisers to

attract tourists to the fair.¹⁰ To achieve these twofold goals amid a vacuum of design strategy for Chinese pavilions in international events in the 1980s, the concepts of orientalisising and self-orientalisising of the country's culture including architecture were employed to shape the form and space of this pavilion. This was realised through the cooperation of Chinese and American designers, with traditional Chinese architectural signs – including the pagoda, gateway, the Great Wall, and Chinese palatial architectural elements – were negotiated, debated, and exchanged in three distinctly different architectural proposals of the pavilion. Finalised by a Chinese exhibition planner rather than a professional architect, the pavilion highlighted a subtle disassociation between international pavilion design and the architecture community in the PRC. The overt display of traditional elements in this pavilion incurred severe criticism from Chinese architects, but it also urged the latter to actively take part in the design of Chinese pavilions at later fairs. It highlights a key moment in the architectural history of modern China when Chinese officials, exhibition planners and professional architects began to reconsider their role in pavilion design, the themes to be represented in Chinese pavilions in international events, and the methods to represent them through architectural languages.

The PRC's participation in the Knoxville fair

China began participating in world's fairs from the second half of the nineteenth century. From 1867 to 1904, Haiguan Zong Shuiwusi (Imperial Maritime Customs Service, IMCS), a Qing governmental tax collection agency chaired by a British national, Robert Hart, was authorised to organise China's exhibitions at world's fairs.¹¹ Foreign employees who held the nationality of the host country of the fairs were selected by the IMCS to organise Chinese exhibitions during their furlough.¹² For world's fairs in which China did not officially participate, Chinese communities in the host countries sometimes volunteered to organise exhibitions and to erect pavilions. After 1912, the newly established Republic of China (ROC) replaced the Qing as the representative of China. In 1949, the Nationalist government of the ROC was defeated by the Communist Party of China and retreated to Taiwan. The Communists founded the People's Republic of China in the same year. With the support of Western countries, the Nationalists in Taiwan continued to participate in world's fairs under the name of China until the 1970s. Parallel to this, the PRC, since its establishment in 1949, had been excluded from world's fairs but managed to participate in some smaller international exhibitions in East Germany, India, Pakistan, and Japan.¹³ Political tension and cultural isolation during the Cold War were to blame for the PRC's absence from world's fairs.¹⁴

However, the 1970s witnessed radical changes in the PRC's global relations. After the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s, China began to restructure its foreign policy to establish connections with non-socialist countries while strengthening ties with Third World

countries.¹⁵ In 1971, with the support of a growing number of newly independent Third World countries and some countries from the Western Bloc, the PRC replaced the ROC government in Taiwan as the only legitimate representative of China to the United Nations.¹⁶ Meanwhile, in the United States, there was also a growing voice to cooperate with Communist countries in managing global problems at the height of the Cold War.¹⁷ For the US, China – with its deteriorating relations with the Soviet Union – could be turned into leverage against the Soviet Union in international affairs.¹⁸ After 1978, the Reform and Opening-Up policy, launched by Deng Xiaoping to reconnect China to the world economy, further accelerated the rapprochement of the two nations.¹⁹ After years of initial contact, the year 1979 marked the formal rapprochement of the two nations after three decades of tension.

The transition in global politics in the 1970s also led to the PRC's growing involvement in world's fairs from which it had been excluded before. For example, while the PRC did not participate in the 1967 World Exposition in Montreal, it organised an exhibition entitled 'Paintings, Arts and Handicrafts Exhibition of the People's Republic of China' in Montreal in 1972, as part of the city's annual 'Man and His World Exhibition' after the fair. To send a clear political signal to the world, representatives of the PRC specified that they wished to occupy the Chinese pavilion formerly erected by the ROC at the 1967 fair, as an assertion that they had regained the right to represent China from the latter.²⁰ The mayor of Montreal tried to offer another pavilion for the exhibition to avoid potential political problems, but this was not accepted. *The New York Times* thus commented that the PRC's occupation of the previous ROC pavilion was 'itself imbued with political symbolism.'²¹ At the entrance of the pavilion, the main beam that was originally carved with the Chinese characters 'Zhong Hua Min Guo', meaning 'Republic of China', was covered by a tablet writing 'People's Republic of China' in both English and Chinese. A large picture of Mao Zedong greeting Chinese workers and children was hung in the pavilion. Similarly, after the normalisation of the Sino-Japanese relations in 1972, Japan announced that it 'recognises the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal Government of

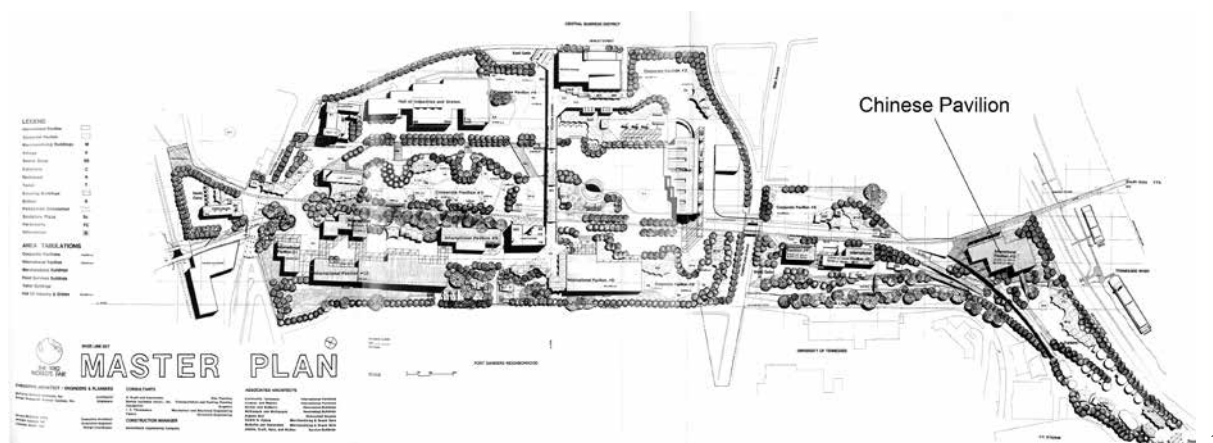
China'.²² In the following 1975 International Ocean Exposition hosted by Japan in Okinawa, though the PRC did not participate, the Nationalists in Taiwan were also excluded.

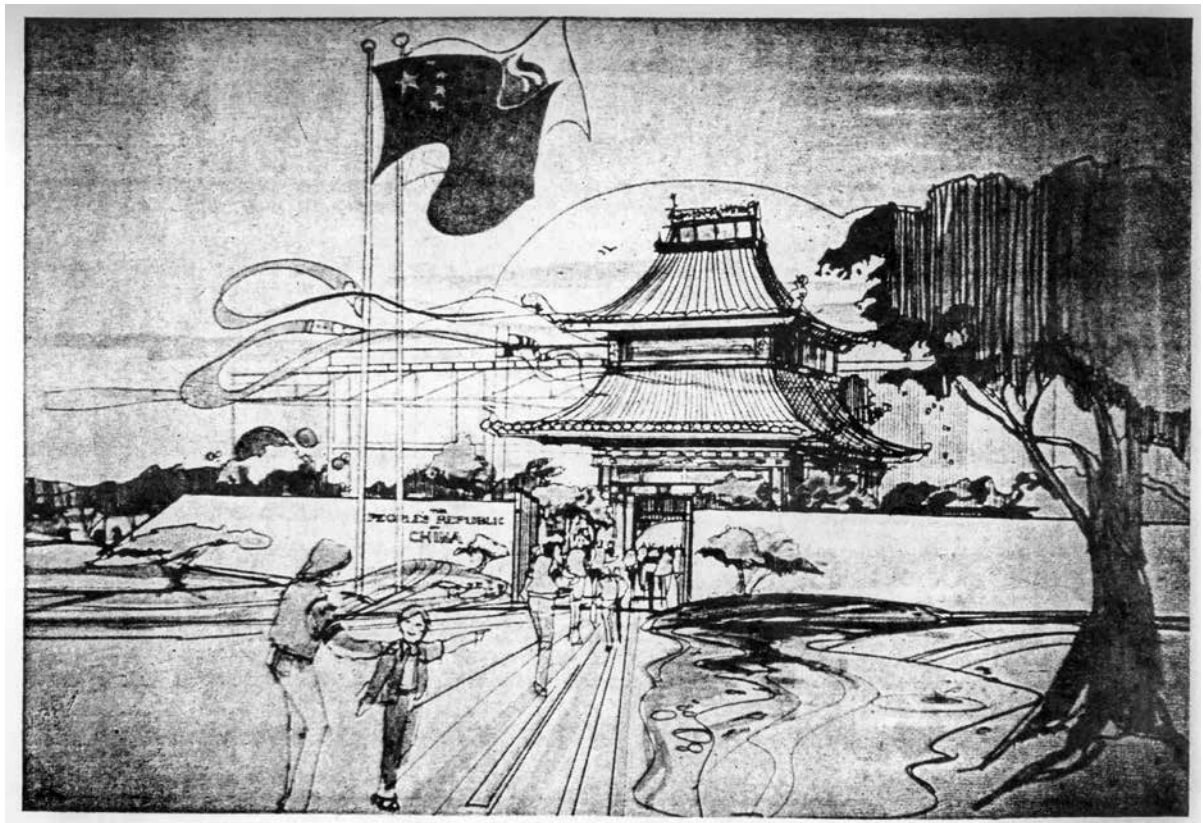
The Knoxville International Energy Exposition, held from May to October of 1982, further exhibited this changing global politics. Organised in Knoxville – the self-declared 'Energy Capital of the World' – the event aimed to stimulate investment growth in the area.²³ Echoing American diplomatic policy at that time, and considering the financial feasibility of the fair, the KIEE Committee decided in a preliminary meeting in 1978 that the involvement of a major foreign power with limited cultural exchange with the US – therefore either China or the Soviet Union – would be crucial to the fair's success.²⁴ The Soviet Union expressed initial interest in participation, but after its invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the subsequent US boycott of the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow, the country withdrew its participation.²⁵ China, under these circumstances, became the only choice left. The initial invitation was sent in early 1980, and representatives of the fair committee were invited to visit China in the same year. This was followed by a visit of Chinese officials to the fairground in 1980.²⁶ However, no firm decision to participate had been made by officials in China despite these initial contacts and discussions.

The first two proposals of the Chinese Pavilion

China's hesitation was associated with several key obstacles. The efforts of Chinese and American officials to remove these obstacles, together with the twofold role of the pavilion as an exhibition structure and a commercial investment, shaped the design and construction of the Chinese Pavilion. For the Chinese officials, the first obstacle emerged from the theme of the fair. After receiving the invitation, the State Council of China commissioned the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) – a national foreign trade and investment promotion agency founded in 1952 – to draft an exhibition plan. The CCPIT had organised China's participation in international exhibitions on a smaller scale, but had

2 Master plan of the KIEE fairground.





3 Chinese Pavilion for the Knoxville fair, first proposal, perspective drawing, designed by Levitan Design Associates, Inc.

no experience of arranging an exhibition at a world's fair.²⁷ However, given China's limited industrial and technological development over the past decades, the theme of the fair – energy – became a major challenge to the exhibition arrangement. Officials of the CCPIT found that energy-related technology and programmes in China at that time were limited to hydroelectricity, offshore coal mining, and traditional biogas digesters, which lacked technological innovation compared with other countries at the fair displaying nuclear energy, robots, and aerodynamic cars.²⁸ To address this dilemma, the CCPIT proposed to expand the scope of its exhibition to also display the rich culture of China. In other words, in addition to a biogas digester and a solar-powered dragon boat as energy-related exhibits, China's exhibition was supposed to include a portion of bricks from the Great Wall, porcelain artefacts, silk, and terracotta warriors and horses from the necropolis of Qin Shi Huang (the First Qin Emperor) in Xi'an as major attractions in the exhibition.²⁹ Meanwhile, to demonstrate the idea of 'people's republic' – a concept that distinguished the PRC from the previous representatives of China, Chinese people and their daily life were to be represented as special 'exhibits' in the pavilion to display Chinese culture more vividly and interactively. Forty representatives of various professions from China would work in the Chinese

Pavilion, showing the everyday life of Chinese people through interactive activities. A Chinese restaurant was planned in the pavilion to display Chinese food culture.³⁰ Despite this deviation from the fair's theme, the exhibition plan was accepted by the fair organisers, who, considering the attractiveness of exotic Chinese culture to the American people, believed that the Chinese exhibition would be 'a tremendous draw for the fair'.³¹

While the initial plan of the content of the Chinese exhibition was negotiated in February 1981, China had yet to formally confirm its participation in the fair. To urge China to proceed with its participation proposal, the enthusiastic fair committee commissioned an American firm, Levitan Design Associates, Inc., to provide a preliminary design of the Chinese Pavilion as a suggestion to the Chinese officials.³² Established by exhibit designer Leonard Levitan in New York, the company was one of the exhibit design consultants of the Knoxville fair.³³ For the architects of Levitan, their proposal showed a clear effort to display China through emphasising 'typical' traditional Chinese forms. According to the master plan, the Chinese Pavilion was to be the international pavilion G, located near the Tennessee River and close to the amusement area [2]. At the entrance square of the pavilion, the architects proposed erecting 'some form of traditional Chinese architecture, e.g. a copy of a famous gateway, or a pagoda'.³⁴ The architectural drawings completed by architects of Levitan illustrated a Chinese *ting* (garden pavilion) at the entrance of the building, featuring a double-eave *wudian* (hip) roof [3].³⁵ Although the idea was to make the Chinese Pavilion

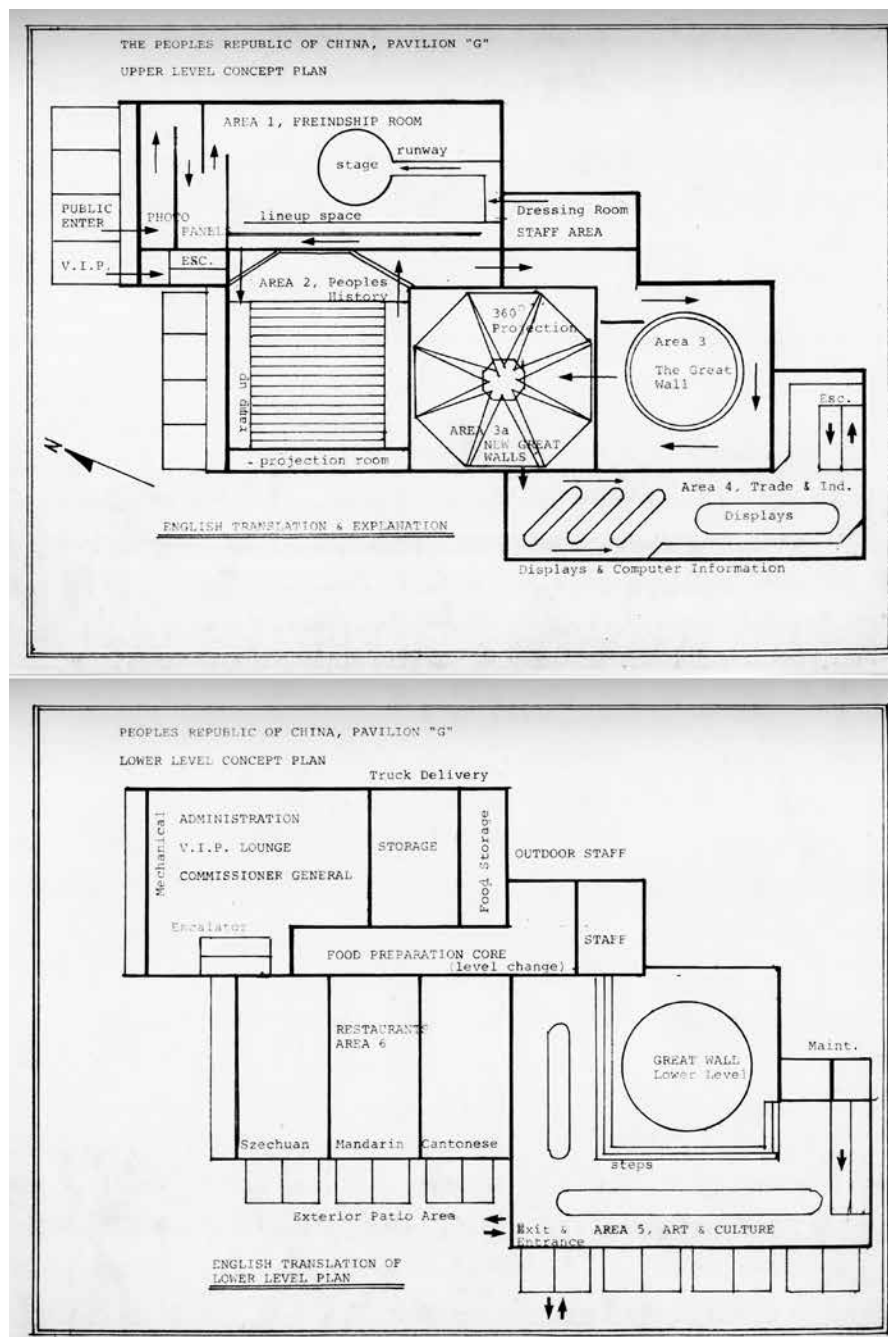
more recognisable to the American visitors, such an arrangement also represented a continuous 'orientalisation' of Chinese culture and architecture by Western scholars over centuries.³⁶ As Edward Said points out in his book *Orientalism*, 'orientalisation' refers to the process of representing Eastern cultures through exaggerating the stereotyped, biased, and exotic features of the East by European and American scholars under the framework of colonialism. Through the 'orientalisation' of the Orient, the Europeans invented the 'exotic East' and the 'inscrutable Orient', which are cultural representations of peoples and things considered inferior to the peoples and things of the West.³⁷ The 'orientalisation' of Chinese architecture was evident in the erection of the Chinese Pavilion at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St Louis, designed by British architects Atkinson & Dallas as an eclectic replica of the residence of Prince Pulun in Beijing [4]³⁸. A gateway and a *ting* – 'typical' Chinese structures in Western eyes – were added to the entrance of the pavilion, while the upturned roof corners of the original building were further exaggerated to make them more 'Chinese'. For the 1982 Knoxville fair, the 'orientalisation' of the Chinese Pavilion represented a continued perception of the 'Otherness' of Chinese culture by the Americans; yet meanwhile, for the American architects who knew little about modern China due to the lack of cultural exchange during the Cold War, a stereotyped Chinese identity based on

traditional elements was a convenient choice to display identity and attract tourists.

Although the Chinese *ting* in Levitan's proposal seemed to be a stereotypical representation of traditional Chinese culture, the design of the main pavilion materialised efforts to display the industrial achievements of the PRC alongside its cultural attractions, as well as the purpose of the fair organisers to sell the Chinese pavilion as a tourist attraction to the American visitors. While the overall plan was simple and functionalist, the whole arrangement centred on the display of a portion of the Great Wall, an ancient cultural heritage that was a symbol of China in the eyes of many Americans. The main pavilion was divided into six areas: the friendship room (Area 1), people's history theatre (Area 2), the Great Wall and the 'New Great Walls' (Area 3), industry and trade (Area 4), people's culture (Area 5), and the restaurant area (Area 6) [5].³⁹ The first area, the friendship room, was an entrance hall decorated with traditional Chinese textiles, photographs of Chinese people, and banners and streamers on the wall. The name 'friendship' was embedded with the implication of the rapprochement between China and the US. As remarked by the Chinese Commissioner General of

4 Chinese Pavilion at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St Louis, designed by Atkinson & Dallas, 1904.



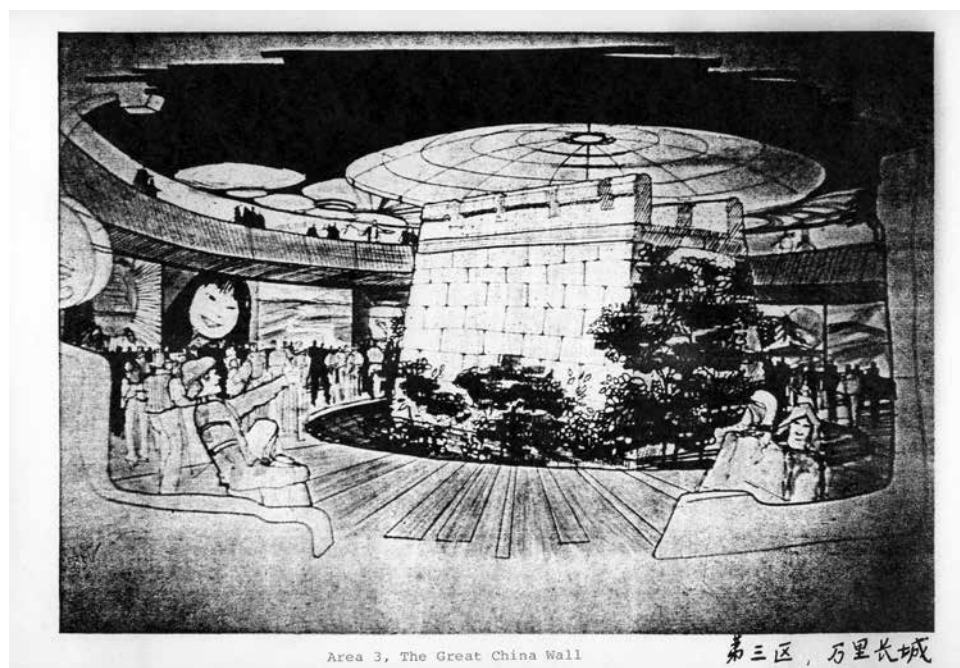


5 Chinese Pavilion for the Knoxville fair, first proposal, plans, designed by Levitan Design Associates, Inc.

the pavilion, 'a bridge of friendship between China and the United States was connected in 1979'.⁴⁰ The next area, people's history theatre, was where documentaries of the life of Chinese people were shown. Accommodating the main attraction, Area 3 was a huge exhibition hall with skylight and interior greenery where China could reconstruct a portion of the Great Wall with original bricks shipped from China [6]. For the fair organisers, the Great Wall, as one of China's most renowned cultural heritage sites, was supposed to be a main attraction in the pavilion for American tourists. This is clearly reflected in the fair readiness manager's remark that 'the Great Wall signifies China'.⁴¹ The next room, marked as the 'New Great Walls' in the centre of the plan, was a theatre to introduce the energy programmes of the PRC related to hydroelectric power, offshore oil and coal: the Gezhouba scheme, the Three Gorges scheme, and

other projects under construction. By referring to these programmes as the 'New Great Walls', it denotes a message that these energy projects – considering their massive scale and benefit to Chinese people – were as remarkable as the Great Wall. Areas 4 and 5 were planned to house the exhibition of China's industrial products and cultural artefacts, and three restaurants – serving Cantonese, Sichuanese, and Mandarin cuisine – were accommodated in Area 6.⁴²

We do not know exactly why this initial proposal did not proceed, but existing archival materials indicate that sometime in 1981, the Chinese representatives saw this proposal during negotiations with the Americans, expressed their interest in having some 'outdoor exhibits focusing on the Great Wall' and might have suggested a major revision of the design.⁴³ Yet regardless of the



6 Chinese Pavilion for the Knoxville fair, first proposal, interior perspective for Area 3, designed by Levitan Design Associates, Inc.

7 Chinese Pavilion for the Knoxville fair, second proposal, ground floor plan.



historical details, discussion over this first proposal was overshadowed by a major breakthrough in the negotiation over China's participation in the fair in the second half of 1981. For China, the most essential and long-lasting political burden that kept preventing it from confirming its participation was the issue of Taiwan. While the US government declared it acknowledged the 'one-China' policy upon the normalisation of relations between the US and the PRC, US arms sales to Taiwan continued to remain a dark cloud on the horizon at the time of the fair. The PRC wanted to be assured that there would be only 'one China' represented at the fair, but the fair organisers remained equivocal on this issue in previous communications.⁴⁴ In October 1981, with the help of Chinese American businessman James Ying, KIEE President S.H. Roberts Jr visited China and met representatives of the PRC government, including Chinese Vice-Premier Wan Li. During their four-day negotiation, the American representatives officially confirmed that the fair would exclude Taiwan, stating that this adhered to the Department of State's official policy of recognising the PRC as the sole government of China.⁴⁵ Fair Readiness Manager Paul Creighton, later commented, 'if we'd had Taiwan, [mainland] China wouldn't be here.'⁴⁶

It was also during this visit that China's last concern was removed – the issue of the budget. With no previous experience of world's fairs, Chinese officials originally thought the fair would be a small science and technology conference, but subsequent communications made them realise that the event was larger and thus more expensive than they had expected.⁴⁷ This affected China's willingness to participate, as the country was still struggling to recover economically after the Cultural Revolution. Fortunately, this problem was solved as the fair committee agreed to provide one million American dollars to pay for the construction cost, the shipment

of exhibits, and the insurance on antiquities.⁴⁸ To attract external investment, the fair committee also conducted fundraising campaigns for the construction of the Chinese pavilion. KIEE President Roberts wrote letters to a number of American entrepreneurs, including the president of the Coca-Cola Company, inviting them to sponsor the construction of the Chinese Pavilion.⁴⁹ With this last obstacle removed, China officially confirmed its participation in the fair by the end of 1981.

With political concern lifted and the issue of money resolved, it is unsurprising to find that a more ambitious – and also more costly – proposal of the Chinese Pavilion emerged at this point [7].⁵⁰ This proposal was also completed in the United States to replace the first one, extending the strategy of orientalisising Chinese culture and architecture. Considering the comments from Chinese officials in previous contacts, this proposal featured a bolder manipulation of the idea of the Great Wall. A large portion of the Great Wall – including a watchtower – was to be replicated to form the northwest corner of the pavilion, accommodating exhibitions of

traditional artworks and restaurants inside the wall. The imitation of a portion of the Great Wall as an architectural component which can be seen from outside the pavilion – in addition to the exhibition of real Great Wall bricks inside the pavilion – visualised the ambition of the American architects and fair organisers to attract local visitors to the pavilion through a well-known cultural symbol. This proposal was then brought to China and presented to the officials of the CCPIT; to study the real Great Wall, the American architects visited China and investigated the Badaling Great Wall outside Beijing. Though the proposal was approved by the CCPIT, the American architects discovered during their visit that the structure of the Great Wall was much more complicated than they had expected, and that to realise their plan, over one hundred thousand bricks would need to be carefully replicated.⁵¹ This largely exceeded the budget of the construction of the Chinese Pavilion (even with external funding from the American merchants), and rendered this proposal impractical.

The Chinese Pavilion during and after the fair

With the second proposal abandoned due to financial reasons and to avoid potential problems that emerged from the American architects' unfamiliarity with the Chinese cultural and economic context, the CCPIT commissioned its own designer, Shen Rongxuan, to design the Chinese Pavilion. Although he was not a professional architect, Shen worked as an exhibition planner at the CCPIT and completed his proposal by January 1982. His design was quickly approved as the commencement date of the fair approached and was then unveiled to the public by KIEE President Roberts together with the Chinese Ambassador to the United

Nations, Mi Guojun.⁵² Shen's design indicated influence from the previous two proposals by American architects, but significantly showcased an influence from traditional Chinese palatial architecture.⁵³ This proposal included two structures at the entrance of the pavilion with Chinese features: a monumental tower in the entrance square, and a colonnade at the main façade of the building [8]. The monumental tower was placed on a stone Xumizuo (a base or platform on which Chinese imperial buildings are built) and topped by a mildly curved Chinese *cuanjian* (tented) roof. The roof was covered with green tiles, which were only allowed to be used in high-level palatial or government buildings in Imperial China. The colonnade at the entrance imitated structural elements of Chinese imperial palaces, with concrete facsimiles of timber components including columns, beams, *dougong* (bracket set) and *queti* (bracket) – all painted with decorative motifs resembling those at the Forbidden City. The erection of two 'traditional Chinese structures' at the entrance of the pavilion echoed the Levitan proposal. The main block of the pavilion behind the colonnade, however, was built as a temporary steel box, painted blue on the outside and black on the inside by the fair organisers [9].

This proposal marked a shift in design strategy for Chinese pavilions in international events, which mirrored the changing relationship between political agenda and pavilion design in China since the 1950s. For example, China participated several times in the

8 Chinese Pavilion for the Knoxville fair, third proposal, perspective drawing, designed by Shen Rongxuan.





9

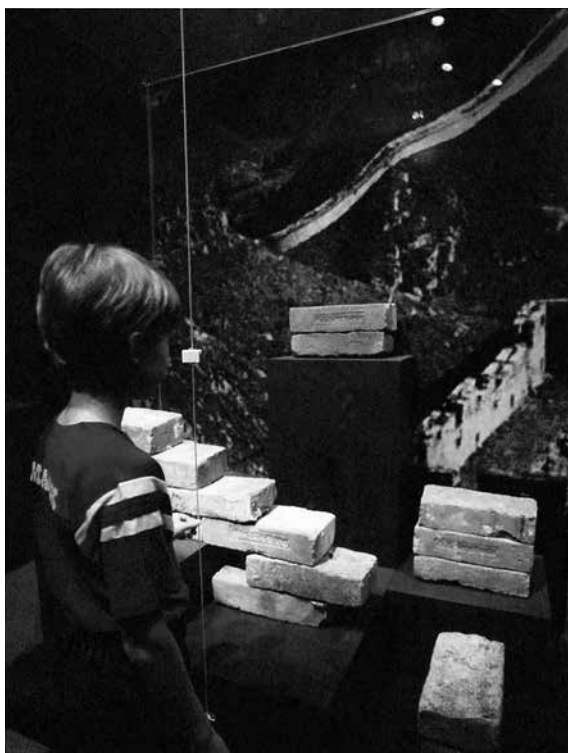
9 Chinese Pavilion at the Knoxville fair, interior, designed by Shen Rongxuan.

Leipzig Trade Fairs held in East Germany in the 1950s, and the design strategies changed considerably from the early 1950s to the late 1950s. Designed by Chinese artist Zhang Ding, the Chinese Pavilion at the 1954 Leipzig Fair was decorated with a series of traditional elements, including the colourful eaves, balustrades, and particularly the big Chinese roof. However, from 1959 onwards, all the traditional elements were removed, as Chinese officials considered them improper for a socialist country.⁵⁴ Therefore, the Chinese Pavilion in the 1959 Leipzig fair turned out to be an undecorated international style building from the exterior, featuring a concrete box with modernist glass windows and straight lines. The rejection of traditional elements from the pavilion in the 1959 Leipzig fair was a clear political sign that the country wanted to create a brand-new image of socialist China that broke away from its tradition.⁵⁵ As for the interior, the Chinese pavilions at the 1959 and 1960 Leipzig fairs exhibited the political slogan of the Great Leap Forward Movement sweeping China at the time: 'to walk on two legs' – to expand both industrial and agricultural production. To be more specific, in the Chinese Pavilion of 1959, an oversized model steel furnace was displayed to show China's ambition to overtake the US and the UK in steel production; in the 1960 pavilion, replicas of cotton bolls and grain stalks were used to decorate its interior, demonstrating China's agricultural development.⁵⁶

The sudden shift in design strategies from the early 1950s to the late 1950s was likely associated with the changes in China's global relations. In the early 1950s, the Soviet theory of 'Socialist Realism' was adopted by China in various design disciplines, which promoted a revivalist representation of 'national form' (*minzu xingshi*) based on a systematic

organisation of traditional elements. However, due to the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations in the second half of the 1950s, this theory was abandoned, leading to the replacement of traditional elements with political symbols related to the specific Chinese socialist movements and leaders.⁵⁷ The use of political symbols continued in the 1960s and 1970s when China attended smaller international exhibitions in Albania and Japan. The Chinese pavilions erected during this period were decorated with red banners, torches, and portraits of Mao Zedong as ideological symbols. Parts of the pavilions were devoted to displaying the 'achievements' of the Cultural Revolution.⁵⁸ No traditional elements were used.

With the easing of the political environment in China after 1978, there appeared a vacuum in design strategy for exhibition pavilions at international fairs. Because the fervour of ideological promotion was contrary to the new Reform and Opening-Up policy launched by Deng Xiaoping, the display of traditional Chinese culture was employed again to fill this gap. In an interview with Shen, he admitted that the chief concern of his proposal was to represent traditional Chinese cultural and architectural characteristics at the pavilion.⁵⁹ In addition to the monumental tower and the colonnade, inside the pavilion, a large number of Chinese lanterns were shipped from China and installed to enhance the atmosphere of traditional Chinese culture.⁶⁰ There was also an eight-cornered *ting* inside the pavilion, where Chinese handicrafts were made by artists.⁶¹ During the



10 Chinese Pavilion at the Knoxville fair, interior showing Great Wall bricks, designed by Shen Rongxuan.

construction, it is interesting to point out that the Chinese organisers selected and commissioned a Chinese engineer with knowledge of traditional carpentry to supervise the installation on the fairground.⁶² This clearly revealed the design strategy of Shen to represent traditional Chinese building tectonics in an overt manner. Created for Western audiences by a Chinese designer, Shen's collage and exaggeration of the 'typical' traditional Chinese symbols echoed the concept of self-orientalisation. Following Said's notion of Orientalism and orientalisation, self-orientalisation – the spontaneous process by which non-Western cultures emphasise their own stereotyped images for Western audiences – developed in Asia in fields such as literature, tourism, and filmmaking with the rise of global consumerism in the second half of the twentieth century.⁶³ In China, self-orientalisation in transnational cultural interactions was widely observed in the 1980s as a pragmatic means of attracting Western economic interest in the cultural industries; it was also an effort to convert China's global image from that of a leftist socialist country into a friendly ancient civilisation in the new global politics.⁶⁴ As an exhibition planner, Shen might have been influenced by this trend.

The pavilion received mainly positive interpretations among American and Chinese audiences at the fair; major criticism only emerged after two decades. According to American media, the Chinese Pavilion was the most popular and

successful pavilion at the Knoxville fair with an average queue time of 45 minutes, even if the number of bricks from the Great Wall displayed in the pavilion – compared to the first proposal – was significantly reduced due to requirements of China's Cultural Heritage Administration [10].⁶⁵ However, it was mainly the exhibits, rather than the pavilion building itself, that attracted the Western tourists.⁶⁶ The Chinese officials seemed to be satisfied with the design of the pavilion. The CCPIT praised the design of Shen, announcing that the Chinese-style colonnade and tower successfully demonstrated the unique cultural identity of the Chinese nation.⁶⁷ The designer Shen continued to be commissioned as the architect of Chinese pavilions at the 1985 International Exposition in Tsukuba and the 1986 World Exposition on Transportation and Communication in Vancouver with a similar design. Each featured a flat-roofed colonnade decorated with Chinese palatial details and colour schemes, placed in front of a modernist cubic main block.⁶⁸

Despite such 'success', the Chinese Pavilion in Knoxville shed light upon a subtle relationship between pavilion design and the architectural profession of China in the late 1970s and the 1980s. As the easing of the political environment led to freer discussion over the idea of the 'national form' ('*Minzu Xingshi*') of China, this period witnessed the emergence of various attempts to represent Chinese culture and architecture through modern architectural languages. Following Deng Xiaoping's slogan to 'emancipate the mind and seek truth from facts' in 1978, architecture, like other fields in the cultural sector, enjoyed a period of open theoretical discussion on various issues in the early 1980s, published in polemical articles by architectural scholars and practitioners in *Jianzhu Xuebao*, the official publication of the Architectural Society of China. Many of them argued that, in order to liberate Chinese architects' minds and broaden their views, it was necessary to learn from foreign architecture, including that of capitalist countries.⁶⁹ Since this period overlapped the popularity of postmodernism in Europe and the United States, postmodernist theories were introduced to China, along with the erection of innovative projects by overseas architects such as I.M. Pei.⁷⁰ The pursuit of postmodernism, particularly the celebration of culture, history, and meaning in architecture, ignited another discussion on the representation of Chinese national form in the new environment. In particular, there emerged a voice to examine and distinguish the 'form' and 'essence' of Chinese architecture, and to critically inherit these through scrutinising the rationale behind them.⁷¹ For example, I.M. Pei's Fragrance Hill Hotel [11], completed in 1982, exemplified a modern representation of Chinese architectural features not only through straightforward manipulation of traditional forms, but largely via application of Chinese garden design principles in spatial planning; meanwhile, from the 1970s, there was a growing interest among architects in southern China to unify the landscape with architectural space with distinctive sense of locality, represented by the



11

Eastern Hotel and Baiyun Hotel in Guangzhou.⁷² However, none of these were reflected in the design of the Chinese Pavilion in Knoxville. A key reason, as pointed out by Chinese commentator Fang Zhenning, was that the officials of the CCPIT had long regarded the design of the Chinese Pavilion as rather an exhibition planning project than an architectural one.⁷³ Since the Leipzig Trade Fairs, the CCPIT had been commissioning its own exhibition planners to design the Chinese Pavilion in international events; Chinese professional architects remained uninvited and probably also uninterested in this mission.⁷⁴

Yet after the Knoxville fair, a growing interest in world's fairs among Chinese society and the continued isolation between pavilion design and the architectural community began to arouse the attention of Chinese architects and architectural scholars. Criticism of Chinese pavilions and the Close Door Policy of the CCPIT by Chinese architects emerged around the end of the twentieth century.⁷⁵ Deng Gang argues that the Chinese pavilions designed by the CCPIT were merely collages of cultural symbols, without reinterpreting or refining them in architectural language.⁷⁶ Zheng Shiling, academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and a professor of architecture at Tongji University, argues that the Chinese pavilions erected in the 1980s and 1990s were 'unsuccessful', and also criticised the superficial representation of Chinese-ness through traditional signs.⁷⁷ Those controversial Chinese pavilions, based on a similar design strategy to the one in Knoxville, prompted the CCPIT to amend its policy to welcome the involvement of Chinese architects in pavilion design. From the 2005 Aichi Expo in Japan, the CCPIT began to invite bids from the public for the design of the Chinese Pavilion; then in the 2010 Shanghai Expo, Chinese professional

11 Fragrant Hill Hotel, Beijing, designed by I.M. Pei, 1982.

architects were in charge of the architectural design of the Chinese Pavilion for the first time. Designed by He Jingtang, the pavilion adopted concepts from the Chinese timber structure and the form of *ding* (an ancient Chinese ritual bronze) but represented them in modern architectural languages.⁷⁸ New spatial ideas, including roof garden and vertical transportation, were also integrated into the design. While the architectural design of these pavilions continued to arouse controversial reception among professional architects and the general public, the Open Door Policy of the CCPIT led to a continuous and diverse exploration of the representation of Chinese architectural identity at world's fairs.⁷⁹

Conclusion

The Chinese Pavilion at the Knoxville fair, despite its temporary nature, acquires a unique status in the architectural history of modern China. As the debut of the PRC at world's fairs, the design and construction of this pavilion illuminate an enthusiastic yet sensitive moment when the PRC interacted with the US against diplomatic sensitivity, economic uncertainty, and shifts in ideological positions during their 'honeymoon' period. China's participation at the fair complied with the diplomatic policies of both countries: under the Reform and Opening-Up policy, the PRC was eager to broaden and deepen its communications with the Western world through this opportunity; meanwhile, inviting China to participate at the fair also echoed the foreign policy of the US to seek cooperation with socialist countries. However, dark clouds, including the issue

of Taiwan, China's limited budget for the pavilion and the fact that China lagged behind major Western countries in terms of energy technology (Western countries displayed nuclear energy, robots, and aerodynamic cars), emerged during negotiations between the two countries. The exclusion of Taiwan and the fact that part of the expenses of construction and shipping was paid for by the Exposition Committee signalled efforts by the two nations – particularly the American side – to move a step forward. The three proposals of the Chinese Pavilion and how they impacted – and were also influenced by – the two-year negotiation on China's participation, reflected this bittersweet moment between the two nations, materialising the sensitivity in communication at the turning point of Sino–American relations.

As both an exhibition structure and a commercial investment, the Chinese Pavilion was meant to satisfy both the Chinese officials' purpose to display the development and culture of the country to an international audience, and the intention of the American organisers to use it as a tool to attract tourists to the fair. Orientalisation and self-orientalisation were employed to achieve these two goals. To create a tourist attraction, the first proposal employed traditional Chinese structures to mark the entrance of the building, while the Great Wall was used to form the

core of the pavilion's plan. The form of the Great Wall was further emphasised in the second proposal. In addition to the commercial value of these arrangements, they also reflected a long tradition within Western society of orientalising Chinese culture and architecture, which can be traced back to world's fairs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This strategy was not opposed by the Chinese officials, for whom the emphasis and sometimes exaggeration of traditional Chinese culture and architecture was an effective way to display the cultural confidence of the nation. For the Chinese designer, the overt imitation and collage of traditional Chinese cultural and architectural elements – amid a vacuum of design theory – were employed to replace ideological promotion in the design of Chinese pavilions in a new era of Reform and Opening-Up. The absence of Chinese professional architects in this process, and the disassociation between pavilion design and the architectural profession in the PRC before the 1980s, reflected divergences in the understanding of pavilion design and the role of professional architects. Thus, the Chinese Pavilion at the Knoxville fair encouraged Chinese officials, exhibition planners, and professional architects to work together to improve the design of Chinese pavilions at international events from various perspectives. This process is ongoing.

Notes

1. Yu Li, *Lishi De Huimou: Zhongguo Canjia Shibohui De Gushi* [A Historical Retrospect: The Story of China's Participation in World Expos] (Shanghai: Dongfang Chubanshe, 2009), p. 78.
2. Edward Denison, 'China since 1914', in *Sir Banister Fletcher's Global History of Architecture*, ed. by Murray Fraser, 2 vols (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), II, pp. 1095–132.
3. Wei Chiyuan, 'Fuhaoxue Shiye Xia Lijie Shibohui Zhongguoguan De Jianzhu Tezheng Chayi Fenxi [Analysis of the Differences in Architectural Features of the China Pavilions of Previous World Expos from the Perspective of Semiotics (1982–2020)]', *Jianzhu Yu Wenhua*, 17:5 (2020), 186–7.
4. Starting in the late eighteenth century, world's fairs refer to a loose genre of universal exhibitions that combine cultural exchange, trade and economic interests, and national branding. It has been standardised and regulated since 1928 by the Paris-based Bureau International des Expositions, which categorised world's fairs into World Expos, Specialised Expos, Horticultural Expos, and the Milan Triennial. The 1982 Knoxville fair was a Specialised Expo. See Paul Greenhalgh, *Fair World: A History of World's Fairs and Expositions, 1851–2010* (Winterbourne: Papadakis, 2011).
5. Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), p. 18.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3.
7. Paul Walker, 'The Invisible "East": Fletcher and the Unseen Ho-o-den', in *Oriental Occidental: Geography, Identity, Space: International Proceedings*, ed. by Sibel Bozdoğan and Ülker Berke Copur (Istanbul: ACSA International Conference, 2001), pp. 172–5.
8. Harry Kurniawan, 'The Architecture Explained by President Sukarno: Indonesian Pavilion in 1964 New York World's Fair, part 1', *AIJ Journal of Technology and Design*, 24:58 (2018), 1279–84.
9. Meredith Martin, 'Staging China, Japan, and Siam at the Paris Universal Exhibition in 1867', in *Beyond Chinoiserie: Artistic Exchange between China and the West during the Late Qing Dynasty (1796–1911)*, ed. by Petra ten-Doesschate Chu and Jennifer Milam (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2019), pp. 122–48.
10. Lai Delin, Wu Jiang, Xu Subin, 'Qianyan [Introduction]', in *Zhongguo Jindai Jianzhushi [Architectural History of Modern China]*, ed. by Lai Delin, Wu Jiang, and Xu Subin, 3 vols (Beijing: Zhongguo Jianzhu Gongye Chubanshe, 2016), I, pp. i–xi.
11. Yu, *Lishi De Huimou*, pp. 17–24.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
13. Yue Zude, 'Sishiwu Zai Gongming Zai, Guanshan Chu Du Lu You Chang: Huigu 1951 Nian Zhi 1996 Nian Chuguo Zhanlan Shiye De Licheng [Forty-five Years of Achievements, but Still a Long Way to Go: A Review of China's Road to International Exhibition from 1951 to 1996]', in *Zhongguo Zhanlan Nianjian, 1998–1999 [Yearbook of Exhibition of China, 1998–1999]*, ed. by Zhongguo Maocuhui Xuanchuan Chubanshe (Beijing: Guangming Ribao Chubanshe, 1999), pp. 38–44.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
15. Jeremy Friedman, *Shadow Cold War: The Sino-Soviet Competition for the Third World* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), pp. 195–6.
16. 'Restoration of the Lawful Rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations', United Nations Digital Library <digitallibrary.un.org/record/192054> [accessed 13 April 2021].
17. Brian Hilton, 'Maximum Flexibility for Peaceful Change: Jimmy Carter, Taiwan, and the Recognition of the People's Republic of China', *Diplomatic History*, 33:4 (September 2009), 595–613.

18. Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 241–3.
19. Knoxville, Tennessee, Knox County Public Library, McClung Historical Collection, 1982 World's Fair Collection, China's Participation in the 1982 World's Fair: A Brief History, 25 January 1982.
20. 'China Opens Pavilion at Montreal Fair', *New York Times*, 21 July 1972.
21. Ibid.
22. Zhanhou Zhongri Guanxi Wenxian Ji, 1971–1995 [Collection of Literature of China-Japan Relations after World War II, 1971–1995], ed. by Tian Huan (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 1998), pp. 110–11.
23. Energy-Expo '82, 15 October (legislative day, 15 October) 1979, 96th Congress, 1st Session, S.Rpt. 369, Serial Set Vol. No. 13245, Session Vol. No. 10, US Congressional Serial Set, Washington, DC.
24. Wendell Rawls Jr, 'China Exhibit Captivates Crowds at World's Fair', *New York Times*, 5 May 1982.
25. Associated Press, 'WORLD'S FAIR OPENS IN KNOXVILLE', *Boston Globe*, 2 May 1982.
26. McClung Historical Collection, China's Participation in the 1982 World's Fair: A Brief History, pp. 2–3.
27. Yue, 'Sishiwu Zai Gongming Zai, Guanshan Chu Du Lu You Chang', pp. 38–44.
28. Yi Jing, '1982 Nian Shibo Xianqi Zhongguo, Mei Wei Changchengzhuan Dingzuo Fangdan Bolizhao ["China Fever" Observed at the 1982 World's Expo; the US Made Bulletproof Glass Container for the Great Wall Bricks]', *Jinghua Shibao*, 28 April 2010. This report contains an interview of Qiao Murong, former deputy-chair of the Division of World Exposition Affairs of CCPIT.
29. Knoxville, Tennessee, Knox County Public Library, McClung Historical Collection, 1982 World's Fair Collection, China Unveils Pavilion for 1982 World's Fair: Lifestyle, Culture, Food and A Piece of the Great Wall, 25 January 1982.
30. McClung Historical Collection, China Unveils Pavilion for 1982 World's Fair.
31. S. Karene Witcher, 'Chinese From All Walks of Life, Plus the Great Wall of Knoxville', *Wall Street Journal*, 27 January 1982, p. 29.
32. Knoxville, Tennessee, Knox County Public Library, McClung Historical Collection, 1982 World's Fair Collection, People's Republic of China 1982 World's Fair Participation Proposal, undated.
33. *The 1982 World's Expo Official Guidebook*, ed. by Steve Cruse (Knoxville, TN: The Exposition Publishers, 1982), p. 184.
34. McClung Historical Collection, People's Republic of China 1982 World's Fair Participation Proposal, p. 16.
35. A *ting* is a garden pavilion in traditional Chinese architecture. To avoid being mistaken as a Chinese pavilion (the building housing the exhibition) at world's fairs, the original term *ting* is used here.
36. Sir William Chambers, *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, Machines and Utensils* (London: Published for the author, 1757); Sir Banister Fletcher, *A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method: for Students, Craftsmen, and Amateurs*, 6th edn (London: Batsford, 1921), pp. 809–10.
37. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1978), pp. 38–41.
38. Colin M. Selph, 'Dedication of China's Building Site', *World's Fair Bulletin*, 4:12 (1903), 2–4.
39. McClung Historical Collection, People's Republic of China 1982 World's Fair Participation Proposal, pp. 16–36.
40. Rawls, 'China Exhibit'.
41. Patt Morrison, 'Piece of China's Wall Arrives in America', *Los Angeles Times*, 24 March 1982.
42. McClung Historical Collection, People's Republic of China 1982 World's Fair Participation Proposal, pp. 18–36.
43. McClung Historical Collection, China's Participation in the 1982 World's Fair: A Brief History, p. 3.
44. 'US Arm to Taiwan may Hit Ties with China', *Times of India*, 4 March 1982; McClung Historical Collection, China's Participation in the 1982 World's Fair: A Brief History, p. 4.
45. McClung Historical Collection, China's Participation in the 1982 World's Fair: A Brief History, p. 2.
46. Morrison, 'Piece of China's Wall Arrives in America'.
47. McClung Historical Collection, China's Participation in the 1982 World's Fair: A Brief History, p. 2.
48. Witcher, 'Chinese From All Walks of Life, Plus the Great Wall of Knoxville'.
49. Knoxville, Tennessee, Knox County Public Library, McClung Historical Collection, 1982 World's Fair Collection, S.H. Roberts Jr to Charles E.F. Millard, 5 March 1982.
50. Zong Xin, 'Shejishi Yi 28 Nianqian Zhongguoguan: Huashang Xianji Bingmayong Chushi [The Designer Recalls the Chinese Pavilion Erected 28 Years Ago: Chinese-American Businessman Offered Help for Exhibition of the Terracotta Warriors]', *Huaxi Dushi Bao*, 20 April 2010. This report contains an interview of Shen Rongxuan, the Chinese designer of the Chinese Pavilion in Knoxville.
51. Ibid.
52. 'China Plans Great Wall Pieces, Solar-Run Dragonboat for Fair', *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, 25 January 1982.
53. Jianfei Zhu, 'Constructing a Chinese Modernity: Theoretical Agenda for a New Architectural Practice', *Architectural Theory Review*, 3:2 (1998), 69–87.
54. Jennifer Altehenger, 'Industrial and Chinese: Exhibiting Mao's China at the Leipzig Trade Fairs', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 55:4 (2020), 845–70.
55. Ibid., p. 862.
56. Ibid., p. 863.
57. Ji Guohua, '20 Shiji 50 Niandai Sulian Shehui Zhuyi Xianshi Zhuyi Jianzhu Lilun De Shuru He Dui Zhongguo Jianzhu De Yingxiang [The Incursion of Soviet Socialist Realism and Its Influence on Chinese Architecture in the 1950s]', in *Zhongguo Jianzhu 60 Nian (1949–2009): Lishi Lilun Yanjiu [Sixty Years of Chinese Architecture (1949–2009): History, Theory and Criticism]*, ed. by Zhu Jianfei (Beijing: Zhongguo Jianzhu Gongye Chubanshe, 2009), pp. 99–109; Wang Jun, '1955 Nian, "Dawuding" Xingshi Yuyan De Zuzhi Piping [1955: A State Criticism of a Formal Language of "The Big Roof"]', in *Zhongguo Jianzhu 60 Nian (1949–2009) [Sixty Years of Chinese Architecture (1949–2009)]*, ed. by Zhu Jianfei, pp. 74–98.
58. Yue, 'Sishiwu Zai Gongming Zai, Guanshan Chu Du Lu You Chang', p. 40.
59. Yi, '1982 Nian Shibo Xianqi Zhongguo'.
60. Knoxville, Tennessee, Knox County Public Library, McClung Historical Collection, 1982 World's Fair Collection, The People's Republic of China at the 1982 World's Fair (sponsorship agreement), p. 2.
61. Yi, '1982 Nian Shibo Xianqi Zhongguo'.
62. Ibid.
63. Koji Kobayashi, 'Taking Japan Seriously Again: The Cultural Economy of Globalization and Self-Orientalization', in *Global Culture: Consciousness and Connectivity*, ed. by Roland Robertson and Didem Buhari-Gulmez (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 193–210; William G. Feighery, 'Tourism and Self-Orientalism in Oman: A Critical Discourse Analysis', *Critical Discourse Studies*, 9:3 (2012), 269–84; Tacettin Gökhan Özçelik, 'Self-Orientalism and the Media's Role in Turkey Before 2000', *OPUS International Journal of Society Researches*, 17:35 (2021), 2179–208.
64. Ming-chun Ku, 'Becoming Chinese: Self-Orientalization and Cultural Globalization in China's Tourism After 1978' (unpublished PhD thesis,

- New School University, 2005); Wanyi He, 'The "Self-Orientalization" in the Construction of Chinese Film Image and its Path Forward', *International Communication of Chinese Culture*, 12:1 (2025), 161–75.
65. Raymond Sokolov, 'Knoxville's Fair: Sophisticated It Isn't', *Wall Street Journal*, 9 July 1982.
 66. Madeline Brown, 'Knoxville Fair', *New York Times*, 12 September 1982.
 67. Yue, 'Sishiwu Zai Gongming Zai, Guanshan Chu Du Lu You Chang', pp. 38–44.
 68. Wei, 'Fuhaoxue Shiye', p. 187.
 69. Yan Zixiang, 'Jiefang Sixiang, Jiaota Shidi, Nuli Zuohao Jiangong Kancha Sheji Gongzuo [Liberate Mind with Feet on Ground: Endeavour to Do Better Architectural Design]', *Jianzhu Xuebao*, 19:6 (1979), 3–7; Yang Yun, 'You Xifang Xiandai Jianzhu Xin Sichao Yinqi De Lianxiang [Reflections on New Thoughts in Western Modern Architecture]', *Jianzhu Xuebao*, 20:1 (1980), 26–34; Zhang Sizan, 'Tan Xifang Xiandai Jianzhusi De Fendai Yu Jianzhu De Fendai [Discussion on Periodisation of Western Modern Architecture and Architects]', *Jianzhu Xuebao*, 22:10 (1982), 4–7.
 70. Zeng Zhaofen, 'Houxiandai Zhuyi Laidao Zhongguo [Post-Modernism Comes to China]', *Shijie Jianzhu*, 7:2 (1987), 59–65; Peng Peigen, 'Cong Bei Yuming De Beijing Xiangshan Fandian Sheji Tan Xiandai Zhongguo Jianzhu Zhi Lu [From I. M. Pei's Fragrant Hill Hotel in Beijing to Modern Chinese Architectural Design]', *Jianzhu Xuebao*, 20:4 (1980), 4–19; Zhang Ping, 'Houxiandai Zhuyi Yu Zhongguo Dangdai Jianzhu Wenhua [Post-Modernism and Contemporary Chinese Architectural Culture]', *Jianzhu Xuebao*, 26:11 (1986), 68–9.
 71. Chen Shimin, 'Minzu Xingshi Yu Jianzhu Fengge [National Form and Architectural Style]', *Jianzhu Xuebao*, 20:2 (1980), 34–9; Cao Qinghan, 'Jianzhu Chuangzuo Zhong Biyi Shiyong Minzu Xingshi Yi Ci [It is not Proper to Use the Term National Form in Architectural Design]', *Jianzhu Xuebao*, 20:5 (1980), 24–5; Wu Yongzhen, 'Fengjian Guannian He Jiu De Chuantong Xiguan Zai Jianzhu Zhong De Fanying [Reflection of Feudal Concepts and Old Traditional Habits in Architecture]', *Jianzhu Xuebao*, 20:3 (1980), 34–5.
 72. Wu Guangzu, 'Chapter 44: China', in *Banister Fletcher's A History of Architecture*, ed. by John Musgrove (London: Butterworth, 1987), pp. 1450–67.
 73. Fang Zhenning, 'Wudu Shidai De Aizhi Shibohui Zhongguoguan [The Chinese Pavilion in Aichi Expo that Misread the Era]', *Beijing Guihua Jianshe*, 12:3 (2005), 166–9.
 74. In the most prestigious architectural journal in China, *Jianzhu Xuebao*, there was no discussion of the Chinese Pavilion that year. It is interesting to point out that Chinese media also paid limited attention to the Knoxville fair. *Renmin Ribao* (*People's Daily*) did not publish its first report on this fair until six days after the opening of the fair. See Deng Shaogen and Ma Qing, 'Xinzhongguo 60 Nian Shibohui Baodao Fengyun: Yi Renmin Ribao Dui Lijie Shibohui Baodao Weili [Sixty Years of the History of Report on World's Fairs by the New China: A Case Study based on Reports on World's Fairs by Renmin Ribao]', *Xinwen Yu Xiezu*, 27:8 (2010), 70–73.
 75. Deng Gang, 'Shijie Wutai Yanyi Dongfang Wenhua: Shibohui Zhongguoguan Touxu [Eastern Culture Displayed on World Stage: An Analysis of the Chinese Pavilion]', *Shidai Jianzhu*, 22:5 (2005), 35–9.
 76. Ibid., p. 36.
 77. Chen Tongkui, 'Shibo Zhongguo Guan, Cong Shicuo Chufa [Chinese Pavilions at World Expos, Starting from Trial and Error]', *Nan Feng Chuang*, 24:2 (2008), 86–8.
 78. He Jingtang, Zhang Li, Ni Yang, 'Zhongguo 2010 Nian Shanghai Shibohui Zhongguoguan [Chinese Pavilion at the 2010 Shanghai World Exposition]', *Jianzhu Xuebao*, 49:6 (2009), 10–13.
 79. Chen, 'Shibo Zhongguo Guan', p. 88; Zheng Shiling, 'Cong Shanghai Shibohui Dao Milan Shibohui [From Shanghai Expo to Milan Expo]', *Shidai Jianzhu*, 22:4 (2005), 10–13; Liu Yipeng and Yao Ting, 'Zhongguo Dangdai Sheji De Sibian Zhilu: Yi Lijie Shibohui Zhongguoguan Sheji Weili [A Critical approach to Contemporary Chinese Design: Taking Chinese Pavilions at World's Fairs as Examples]', *Chengshi Jianzhu*, 16:3 (2019), 82–3.

Illustration credits

arq gratefully acknowledges:

Author, 7, 11

Knox County Public Library, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10

St Louis Public Library, 4

University of Tennessee, Knoxville Libraries, 1, 9

Competing interests

The author declares none.

Author's biography

Yinrui Xie is a Senior Lecturer in Architecture at the University of Lincoln, United Kingdom. His research concerns the architectural dialogue between China and the West in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He is the author of *Design as Communication: An Architectural History of Christian Universities in China* (London: Routledge, 2025). His research has also been published in *Architectural History*; *The Journal of Architecture*; and *Planning Perspectives*.

Author's address

Yinrui Xie

xieyr14@gmail.com